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ABSTRACT

Personal mobility, which is becoming increasingly necessary in the era of the Internet and the globalization of trade, is a crucial part of the European Union's (EU) goal of becoming a knowledge society. While millions of young people, students, teachers, and trainers have participated in educational, training, and linguistic exchanges in the past decade, socioeconomic, linguistic, psychological, and practical administrative problems continue to limit mobility. Implemented in 51 countries, the Socrates (education), Leonardo da Vinci (vocational training), and Youth (mainly young volunteers) programs represent an EU response to a growing demand for mobility. After ensuring that these programs are implemented with optimum efficiency, the following steps will be undertaken: (1) member states will be urged to cooperate in removing barriers to mobility; (2) procedures for recognizing qualifications and training courses will be improved; and (3) a European "curriculum vitae" will be developed. A mobility action plan that aims to maximize opportunities for mobility emphasizes the following: (1) improving the language preparation of applicants; (2) expanding the training of support staff; (3) exploring new financial arrangements; and (4) launching a major public-awareness campaign highlighting opportunities. (Lists seven web sites in an "Information on the Internet" section.) (MO)

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Europe on the move

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Passport to mobility

Learning differently
Learning abroad

European Commission

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Mobility in education and training: a priority for a Europe of knowledge and a citizens' Europe

The quality of education and training and the dynamism and creativity of youth are among the EU's most valuable assets, constituting the driving force of its prosperity and cohesion.

A knowledge-based Europe is on course and gradually shaping up. The opportunities abroad to which many young people, students, teachers, trainers and, even, researchers aspire are a powerful stimulus. Support for mobility schemes under the EU's Youth, Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes and Marie Curie fellowships has facilitated thousands of study visits, vocational training courses, exchanges and meetings.

These programmes have explored new avenues in the fields of education, training and research, marking out the requirements on the way to mobility. Foreign language learning and the recognition of qualifications are two specific examples.

Yet there are still too many obstacles to make mobility a realistic prospect for all aspirants. Any combination of these diverse obstacles – linguistic, economic, academic, fiscal or administrative – can easily thwart a mobility project. They call for practical and coordinated responses from all with responsibility in this field, from local to Community level.

A step was taken towards a significant development of mobility in Europe at Nice in December 2000, when the European Council made this a political priority in line with the conclusions of the Lisbon Council in March 2000. A recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers together with a mobility action plan are designed to maximise access to

mobility. The challenge is considerable. It calls for all involved in education, training and youth affairs to join with the political decision-makers in accepting it, so as to make our vision of the Europe of knowledge a daily reality for all our citizens.

Viviane Reding
Member of the European Commission
responsible for education and culture

Learning differently, learning abroad

Personal mobility in Europe is becoming increasingly necessary in the era of the Internet and the globalisation of trade. Every year, thousands of young people participate in educational, training and linguistic exchanges. Between 1987 and 1999, more than a million young people, students, teachers and trainers experienced life in another European country through the mobility schemes supported by the EU's Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth programmes. In the same period, thousands of research workers were able to continue their work abroad with the aid of Marie Curie fellowships.

In reality, however, many obstacles to mobility still exist. Whilst the free movement of individuals is a long-established principle in the EU, students, young volunteers, teachers, trainees and researchers continue to face socioeconomic, linguistic, psychological and practical administrative problems in going to live abroad.

The Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth programmes have been pioneers in bringing together educational communities, by initiating cooperation between thousands of schools, universities, vocational training centres and associations. For all the significance of their results, however, these programmes merely represent one stage on the journey to complete European mobility, since they essentially depend on cooperation among institutions and, in the final analysis, involve only a very small percentage of the European population.

The next stage is to make mobility as widely accessible as possible. This is a priority in strengthening the sense of belonging to a European community with all its cultural and economic influence.

In deciding to give a new impetus to individual mobility, the European Heads of State and Government underlined this priority at their European Council meetings in Lisbon, in March 2000, in Nice, in December 2000, and in Stockholm, in March 2001.

Languages, the first discovery

Ignorance of foreign languages is undoubtedly the main obstacle to mobility. That is why, in the words of Wolfgang Mackiewicz of the European Languages Council: 'Young children should learn European languages and culture from the earliest possible moment since, for them, such an approach is entirely natural. All pupils should be able to study some of their subjects, such as history or geography, in a foreign language, and games involving language-use should be offered outside normal lessons.'

Wolfgang Mackiewicz,
European Languages Council

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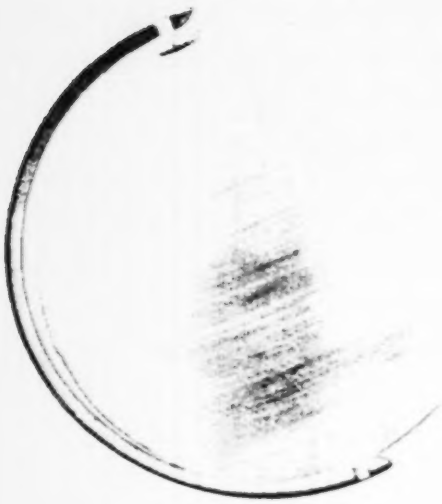

Moving with the times means embracing cross-frontier mobility. PHOTODISC

Learning from each other

Mobility is not only beneficial to students, teachers, trainers, trainees or workers who go abroad, but also to those who come into contact with them. Discussions, the exchange of little 'tricks of the trade' (how to pass exams, ways of motivating pupils, the best data processing systems), the comparison of cultures (Goethe or Descartes, Ibsen or Cervantes, Manchester or Anderlecht) create an environment of mutual emulation for both the visitor and the host.

To this end, all available energy needs to be mobilised and coordination improved between the many decision-making levels. A mobility action plan will underpin the efforts of everyone involved in the coming years. Its main aims are to improve the language preparation of applicants, to expand the training of support staff, to explore new financing arrangements and to launch a major public-awareness campaign highlighting opportunities.

All the Community's resources will be called upon with a view to achieving these objectives: the Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth programmes will be implemented to optimum effect, the Member States will be urged to cooperate in removing barriers to mobility, procedures for recognising qualifications and training courses will be improved and a European 'curriculum vitae' will be developed.

The chairman of the group of national experts who were responsible for preparing this mobility action plan, Jean Germain, stresses that: 'The creation of a Europe of knowledge will also require all those involved in education to give up one of their most deeply held beliefs, namely that their own teaching methods are the best. This will require imagination, dialogue and mutual understanding ... It is time for open-mindedness and for comparing ideas.'

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A valuable personal experience

Increasing employment opportunities

Learning, studying, training or conducting research abroad are all ways of improving employment opportunities. Studies conducted at European level confirm that young people who have studied abroad are often the quickest to find employment and an international career involving greater responsibility.

● Andrea is a 27-year-old German. She is currently employed as a stonecutter in the Italian firm where she originally completed a two-month training course under the Leonardo da Vinci programme. The programme made it possible for her to learn Italian and, finally, find work in a traditionally masculine sector.

● Nial is a 25-year-old Irish research worker who is completing a thesis in Scotland with the help of a Marie Curie scholarship. This involves the application of mathematical theories to images. At present, image studies are purely empirical and Nial's project is designed to provide them with a theoretical foundation. His research results have been presented to the press at international conferences.

Bringing people together

'The arrival of a young European voluntary service worker to help in the youth centre of my small Greek village created a serious problem, since ... he was Turkish!' explains Spiros Tsotos, Director of the Corinth District Youth Council. 'He was, in fact, a German of Turkish extraction, but the young people of the village were outraged by his presence. Only great efforts on the part of his youth centre hosts managed to get him accepted. Things finally settled down and, by the end of his six-month stay, he had made many friends. The whole village was in tears when he left! A few months later, he even received a visit from a group of young Greeks in Berlin.'

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Moving with the times

In the era of the Internet and the 'new economy' in which the globalisation of trade is communications-driven, knowledge of European languages and cultures is more indispensable than ever for a good career. Companies see people with experience abroad as bringing qualifications and knowledge which benefit competitiveness.

'My own professional experience abroad taught me that people did not address the British, the French or the Germans in the same way', explains Séverine Ribeaudeau, director of the Belgian office of marketing company Adelphi International Research. 'In my present post I am currently looking for a new assistant. Obviously, this must be someone who is internationally minded and speaks two or three European languages. We hope to appoint someone who has either worked abroad or been employed in a company with an international outlook.'

The break entailed by a period abroad sometimes also allows people to discover their true professional goals. 'The year I spent in an IT services company in the Netherlands and my extensive travels on its behalf in Belgium not only allowed me to discover two new cultures and meet my future wife, Anne, but also persuaded me to change my career direction', reports Olivier Guibault, a young Frenchman now based in Brussels. 'The travelling, together with a subsequent stay in Canada, made me realise how much I liked meeting people. This prompted me to create Album, a small museum devoted to European cultural diversity.'

A career asset

'In the educational field, a European approach is essential to give students a clear understanding of how to integrate with, and gain the maximum benefit from, a multicultural environment. We must therefore promote greater mobility on the part of students and teachers and knowledge of more European languages.'

'Education for Europeans: towards a knowledge-based society', report of the European Round Table of Industrialists, 1995.

What difference does it really make?

For teachers, students and mobility managers, the effects of periods abroad often continue to be felt long after the event.

• Thérèse Claire, of the Socrates national agency in France, explains: 'The pupils of a Bordeaux technical school decided to build a solar panel with the help of some young Germans as part of the Socrates programme. Once they realised that this was no ordinary scheme, they devoted themselves to it entirely. Working

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on such a specific and highly motivating project is a completely different experience from a simple language-study exchange. During it, language problems virtually disappeared.' Thérèse Claire adds that: 'Mobility programmes help to break down class barriers and bring together teachers from different disciplines. They also provide pupils with a considerable degree of independence. Finally, parents, who are normally cut off from school life, play an active part in mobility projects.'

● As a future English teacher, Sofia, a 26-year-old Swede, was anxious to improve her knowledge of the English language and British culture. The eight months she spent in England under the Lingua programme provided extremely valuable professional and personal experience. They also allowed her English students and pupils to learn a little more about Sweden and its customs.

● Veronika Drexel, director of the 'Aha' youth information centre in Austria, says participation in the European voluntary service scheme enabled the information centre to establish numerous contacts in other Member States, to increase the number of exchange visits by young people and, by improving contacts with local undertakings, to develop its integration into the socioeconomic fabric of the region.

● Michael (23) is participating in the second chance school project in Leeds, where he is improving his English and maths and learning photographic and multimedia techniques. After a number of educational setbacks, he hopes this project will provide him with new skills which will enhance his job prospects.

Mobility also offers less-qualified individuals an opportunity to gain more control of their working lives

'The challenge is to provide mobility opportunities for those who would not normally think of seeking it. Someone with good qualifications will always find a job in the end', explains Babette Nieder of the Franco-German Youth office. 'Mobility offers a genuine opportunity to the less-qualified and can even change their lives. Everyone, regardless of social and cultural background, must be made aware of the possibility of changing direction.'

● Marlene is German. Following a six-month course in England under the Leonardo da Vinci programme, she has just been awarded a certificate by the London Chamber of Trade in recognition of excellent exam results. She is currently working in the marketing and export department of a German company. Her experience has taught her to find inspiration and motivation in the acceptance of different lifestyles and customs.

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The view from the summit

The Bologna conference on the creation of a European higher education area, the extraordinary European Council meeting in Lisbon, the meeting of the G8 education ministers in Okinawa and the European Council in Nice were four recent major events which identified personal mobility as an international political priority.

The Lisbon strategy: Creating a Europe of knowledge

Meeting in Lisbon in March 2000, EU Heads of State and Government undertook to give the Community the most dynamic economy in the world. The way to achieve it was to accelerate economic growth by exploiting one of the old continent's main assets, its grey matter: its knowledge, intelligence and creativity.

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Greater mobility on the part of students, teachers, trainers and researchers will be vital to the success of this ambition.

The first aim must be to ensure that the Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth programmes are implemented with optimum efficiency. This is the case with the new generation of programmes, launched for the period 2000–06, which are based on a decentralised, faster and more effective management system that is closer to Europe's citizens. The EU government leaders announced that they would try to promote a more transparent recognition of diplomas, qualifications and study and training courses undertaken anywhere in the EU.

Obviously, the creation of a knowledge-based dynamic economic area is not simply a question of mobility. The Lisbon strategy will also necessitate completion of the single market, development of an enterprise culture and the creation of a genuine 'European research area'. Mobility among research workers will be encouraged and a high-speed communications network will link all the EU's teaching and research establishments, as well as its libraries and training centres.

G8 seeks to double international mobility in 10 years

Meeting in Okinawa in spring 2000, the education ministers of the G8 countries (USA, France, Germany, Japan, Italy, Canada, United Kingdom, Russia) also stressed the importance of international experience for all. Citing the success of the Erasmus programme, the G8 ministers agreed to double the number of teachers, students, research workers and educational administrators gaining experience abroad in the next 10 years.

Progress in Nice: an ambitious plan to increase mobility projects. EU Heads of State and Government, meeting in Nice in December 2000, agreed to do all they could to step up mobility for students and teachers in Europe. A mobility action plan, a 'toolbox' containing 42 practical measures, was adopted and will be implemented in all the Member States according to the specific characteristics of each country (see p. 24). The first concrete measures were approved at the Stockholm European Council in March 2001.

Lifelong mobility.

Grey matter in action

Nicolas (25) is currently completing his doctoral thesis. Last year, with the aid of a Marie Curie research fellowship, he spent five months in the United Kingdom comparing different approaches to the regulation and modelling of drinking-water treatment processes. The University of Compiègne in Nicolas' native northern France, the University of Sunderland (UK) and the Suez, Lyonnaise des Eaux and Northumbrian Water companies all participated in the project.

The Bologna declaration: Towards the creation of a 'European higher education area'

At a meeting in Bologna (Italy) on 19 June 1999, the education ministers of some 30 European countries agreed on the creation of a 'European higher education area' by 2010.

The Bologna declaration provides for the establishment of an easily comparable system of university qualifications and the pan-European introduction of two main educational cycles, with admission to the second being possible after a minimum of three years. The development of a credit-transfer system as a means of maximising student mobility was another Bologna objective, as was the introduction of a 'diploma supplement' designed to increase the international comparability of qualifications.

'These credits could also be obtained outside the higher education context, *inter alia* through continuing education, subject to their recognition by the host university concerned.' Lastly, the signatories called for the removal of the obstacles which still impede the effective application of the right to free movement and equal treatment.

Confirmed in Prague

Meeting in Prague in May 2001, the education ministers confirmed their determination to remove all obstacles to mobility in Europe for students, teachers, researchers and educational administrators. The European higher education area is now a work in progress.

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The European mobility programmes

The Socrates (education), Leonardo da Vinci (vocational training) and Youth (mainly young volunteers) programmes represent an EU response to a growing demand for mobility among young people, students, trainees, teachers and trainers. For their part, young research workers are eligible for Marie Curie fellowships. In most cases, grants are made through the intermediary of scientific foundations and companies.

Between 1987 and 1999, more than a million individuals benefited from European mobility programmes through the award of scholarships and the promotion of cooperation between thousands of schools, universities, training centres, businesses and NGOs.

With effect from 1995, the Socrates programme has allowed 500 000 young people to undertake a period of study abroad in another European country. Leonardo da Vinci has enabled some 130 000 trainees to improve their employability abroad. The Youth for Europe programme has made it possible for 400 000 young people to undertake short-term exchange visits. Another 5 200 participated in European voluntary service. More than 3 200 workers received Marie Curie fellowships under the fourth research framework programme. The fifth framework programme, which will be completed in 2002, will award the equivalent of 8 600 one-year scholarships to research workers, several thousand of whom will work in one of the Joint Research Centre establishments directly administered by the European Commission.

A new impetus, a new objective

The beginning of the year 2000 saw the start of a new phase in the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes, whilst the Youth for Europe and European voluntary service projects were combined to form the new Youth programme. The availability of increased funding will make it possible to double the number of beneficiaries and extend their activities relative to the preceding period.

These programmes will also have a qualitative impact. The development of interinstitutional cooperation models, the exchange of good practice, the training of 'mobility managers', the attention paid to the reception of individuals participating in mobility programmes and information dissemination measures will make these programmes a major force in the creation of a more mobility-friendly environment.

Socrates: mobility in the education sector

• **Comenius** is the Socrates action which focuses on the first phase of education, from nursery school to primary and secondary levels. Pupils have two mobility options: a limited number can attend project meetings abroad with their teachers and certain classes (minimum age of 14) can participate in language-study exchanges. Trainee teachers can receive part of their initial training abroad. Established teachers and other educational workers can participate in exchange programmes,

Mobility in 31 countries

A total of 31 countries are participating in the Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth programmes. They are the 15 EU Member States (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom), three countries from the European Economic Area (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) and the 13 countries seeking accession to the EU, pursuant to specific procedures (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey as from 2001/2002).

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study visits, practical training in companies and further education courses.

• **Erasmus** enables higher education students to study abroad for between three and 12 months. Its success to date makes it a pioneering and flagship programme for European mobility. Its guiding principle is the full recognition by the establishment of origin of study experience gained abroad, thanks mainly to a system of academic credit transfers. Erasmus grants vary from one country to another, being regarded as a contribution to the additional costs incurred in studying abroad. Erasmus also supports teachers working in other European countries.

• **Grundtvig** promotes the mobility of all categories of adult education workers.

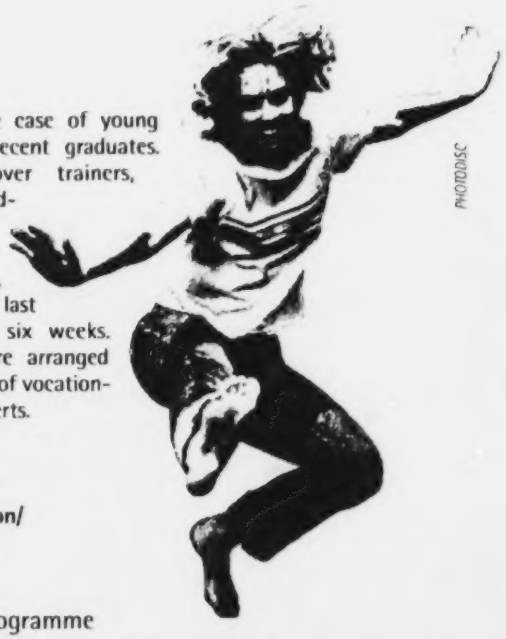
• **Lingua** indirectly promotes mobility by encouraging lifelong language learning.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/socrates.html

Leonardo da Vinci: mobility in vocational training

• **Leonardo da Vinci** is the action programme for the implementation of a Community vocational training policy. One of its main aims is to support transnational mobility projects for individuals – especially young people – undertaking vocational training and for trainers. Trainees are placed in vocational training establishments or undertakings abroad. They remain for periods of from three weeks to nine months in the case of initial training, three to 12 months in the case of students and two to 12 months in the case of young workers and recent graduates. Exchanges cover trainers, vocational guidance counsellors, educational advisors, etc. These can last from one to six weeks. Study visits are arranged for the benefit of vocational training experts.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/leonardo.html



Discover new personal-development and employment opportunities.

The Youth programme

The **Youth** programme is intended to enable young people to acquire knowledge, skills and qualifications as the basis of their future lives, to promote their spirit of initiative and enterprise and to stimulate their creativity. It involves two main schemes. **Youth for Europe** supports transnational exchanges of young people, between the ages of 15 and 25, lasting at least one week. The exchange projects must relate to a specific topic, such as the fight against racism, art, music, anti-addiction programmes or information technologies. **European voluntary service (EVS)** is a project for young people between the ages of 18 and 25 who are prepared to spend several months working on a voluntary basis in a 'host organisation' abroad. It covers the fields of the environment, art, culture, work with children, young or old people, heritage, sport and leisure. EVS normally lasts from six to 12 months.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/youth_fr.html

Tempus: mobility in the East

• The Tempus programme is designed to promote cooperation in higher education with the newly independent States, Mongolia and the countries of central and eastern Europe not involved in the Socrates programme. Individual mobility grants support visits by nationals of the participant countries to the EU Member States and vice versa, between participant countries and to the central and eastern Europe countries applying for EU membership.

http://www.etf.eu.int

Rest of the world

• The EU has also concluded a variety of agreements with Canada, China, the USA, India and Japan aimed at increasing cooperation in the fields of education and culture, particularly through exchanges involving young people and teachers.

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/progr.html

Mobility for research workers

• Individual Marie Curie fellowships are awarded for one to two years to assist the research training of young post-doctoral students in foreign research institutes. Some are expressly reserved for recipients wishing to return to their original, less-favoured Community region. Others are awarded to experienced research workers with a view to improving the transfer of know-how and technologies between firms and universities. Grants for 'in-company placements' help to fund the training of young research workers in an industrial or commercial environment. 'Short-stay' schemes also enable young doctoral researchers to complete some of their studies abroad and to work with an internationally recognised group in their specialist field.

http://www.cordis.lu

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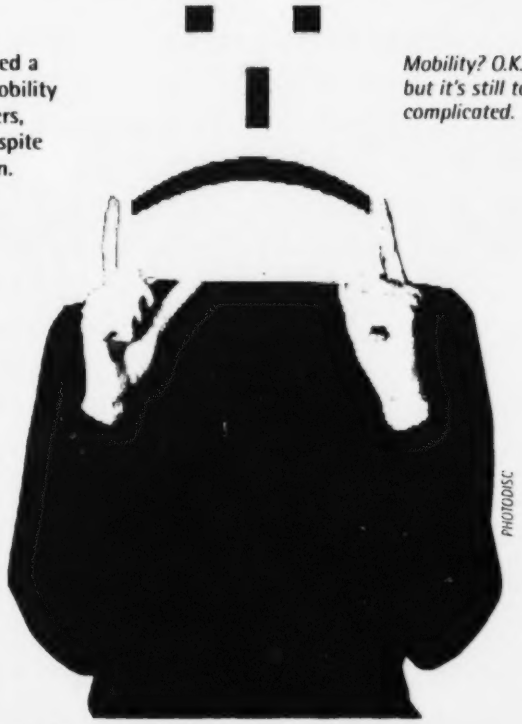
Obstacles to mobility

In 1996, the European Commission published a Green Paper identifying the obstacles to mobility facing students, persons in training, teachers, research workers and young volunteers. Despite undoubted progress, these obstacles remain.



Mobility? O.K., but it's still too complicated.

• **Obstacles to transnational training for the unemployed:** job-seekers lose their entitlement to unemployment benefit and social security payments if they undertake training in another Member State for a period of more than three months. Moreover, on returning to certain countries, they face a new mandatory waiting period before the restoration of benefits. In certain Member States, an absence of more than three months results in the loss of these rights.

• **Problems with regard to the status of trainees and young people:** a student may have difficulty in being taken on under a company training scheme in another Member State if he or she is classified as an employee by that country's legislation.

Starting at six?

Roberto Ruffino of the Italian 'Intercultura' association believes that, whilst there are certainly financial and administrative problems associated with mobility, the main obstacle is psychological. 'Research has shown that most Italian students still regard a year spent abroad as little more than a holiday! Some do see it as an opportunity to improve their knowledge of a foreign language or particular subject, but only 11 % regard it as a means of widening their horizons. To change these attitudes, I would like opportunities for mobility to start at six years of age!'

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• Young graduates gaining unpaid experience in another Member State are not covered by the coordination of EU social security schemes, insofar as they are neither workers nor members of a worker's family. This lack of precise legal status denies them any social security rights. Right of residence can also be affected in cases where transnational training lasts for more than three months.

• **Volunteers face a similar situation:** some countries even tax their accommodation and subsistence allowances.

• **The territorial nature of student grants:** in most Member States, students lose their grants or state aid if they continue their studies in another EU country.

• **Taxation of research grants:** since host countries usually treat recipients of Community grants as workers, they are obliged to pay income tax and social security contributions.

• **Recognition of academic and professional qualifications:** someone wanting to study or undertake training in another Member State outside the framework of Community programmes faces the problem of the lack of reciprocal recognition of qualifications, training schemes and study periods.

Better information

Claude Vitre, a Director of the 'Inter-Échange' vocational training association, believes that:
'It is extremely important to ensure that information permeates to the level of small towns, technical schools and local authorities.
'It is not too difficult for a country like France, with a highly developed network of training associations, to open its doors to foreigners in the context of mobility schemes. On the other hand, exchanges are restricted by a lack of adequate information concerning basic opportunities.'

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Other practical obstacles

The difficulty of opening a bank account whilst officially non-resident in a foreign country, or the frequent denial to persons on mobility schemes of the same public-transport reductions or the same access to sporting and cultural facilities enjoyed by nationals, are all disadvantages which, taken together, create genuine obstacles to mobility.

Another set of problems arises from the fact that mobility largely depends on the availability of competent administrators, i.e. university teachers, training directors, instructors and the like. The training and support received by these 'mobility managers' vary enormously from one region to another, and even between institutions. The attention paid to their training and the pooling of their experiences will be of fundamental importance for the development of mobility in the coming years.

My profession: mobility manager

According to Christina Pedicchio, of the University of Trieste: 'Those responsible for exchange schemes in universities, training centres or local authorities and agencies need to speak several languages, have a knowledge of European educational systems and be fully conversant with the legislation covering the different categories of persons eligible for mobility schemes and the details of the relevant Community programmes. This is a difficult task, deserving genuine recognition. A good mobility manager can make a real difference and solve many of the problems encountered in implementing the programmes.'

Teachers first!

'If young people are not more mobile, it may be because those responsible for their education are themselves still not totally convinced of the advantages of mobility', suggests Bengt Nilsson, of the European Association for International Education. 'Teaching abroad for several months undoubtedly entails additional work and very little recognition. A teacher's career may even be blocked when it should really be advanced by such a commitment.'

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What if you decide to stay?

Supposing, having experienced the joys of a foreign adventure, you decide to settle in the host country for several years? In theory, this is possible, since the EU guarantees the right to seek employment anywhere within the Community. In practice, this means entering an employment market and these vary significantly from one country to another.

Whilst newspaper vacancy notices will help you to find employment in most cases, in some regions it is advisable to look for work via the Internet or through a network of acquaintances. In others, the only option is to contact an employment agency.

It's not easy when you're posted abroad

'Some 15 to 25 % of staff posted abroad return to their home country early', according to Alain Verstandig, the founder of the NetExpat company. 'In nearly 60 % of cases, these failures are due to problems encountered by the expatriate's family, who fail to find their bearings in the host country.'

This specialist in human resources believes that: 'Any proposed employment-related move must take account of the needs of all the family. Nobody – children, partner – must be "sacrificed". Whilst preparation by all is indispensable, especially in the new language, things would be easier if the administrative procedures affecting the whole family could be simplified. Reliable information on conditions in the host country, the special features of its educational system or its employment market would also be very useful.'

You should then make sure that your curriculum vitae satisfies current requirements in the host country, since each has its own definition of a 'good CV'.

If you are lucky enough to be offered a job, do not rely exclusively on your former experience. Ask your employer to point out those features of the contract which are most likely to differ from what you are familiar with: remuneration and your precise responsibilities, leave entitlement and working hours.

The design of a model for a European CV is, moreover, one of the practical initiatives being explored with the Member States by the European Commission.

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Action to promote mobility

The first aim must be to eliminate the main obstacles still facing students, persons in training, young volunteers, teachers and trainers, despite what the EU has already achieved in this field.

Political commitment: the recommendation

The recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers contains a number of measures designed to eliminate obstacles to mobility. Since it is intended to encourage every Member State to make greater efforts in its own sphere, a recommendation represents the most appropriate means of eliminating the obstacles to mobility associated with such different factors as the recognition of diplomas and qualifications, right of residence, social security or taxation.

It applies to all individuals wishing to undertake study, training or voluntary work or to teach or train others in another Member State.

Mobility is everyone's business.

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In practice, it is for the Member States to ensure that mobility is never impeded or penalised. This means that they must take the necessary steps to ensure the transparency of qualifications so as to maximise the benefits of experience gained abroad, particularly in academic and professional circles in the country of origin.

The Member States should therefore allow the beneficiaries of mobility schemes to enjoy the same advantages as host-country nationals engaged in the same activities, such as student travel reductions, accommodation and subsistence allowances and access to libraries and museums.

More specifically, the Member States are called upon to ensure that periods of study abroad receive academic recognition. To this end, use of the European credit transfer system (ECTS) will be encouraged and gradually extended to all areas of education. Member States should also do everything possible to facilitate the integration (guidance, educational psychology services, etc.) of visiting students into the educational system of the host country and their reintegration into the national educational system.

Each country is also encouraged to take measures to ensure that people undertaking training abroad are not discriminated against as regards health and welfare systems.

Further proposals more particularly concern young people going abroad on the European Voluntary Service scheme, for example, to ensure that they continue to receive family allowances.

The recommendation also proposes that Member States should take into account the particular problems that teachers and trainers may have with tax and social security.

And trainees?

Many young people would like to study abroad immediately after completing their secondary education as a means of gaining valuable experience with regard to career options. However, since the type of courses targeted do not generally come under the heading of vocational training, participants cannot be granted trainee status. Their legal status remains ill-defined in several European countries, and this also acts as an obstacle to mobility.

Another suggestion relates to 'European training periods' which would make it easier for teachers and trainers to experience mobility.

Broadly speaking, these are designed to compensate those opting for European mobility, essentially through recognition of what should be regarded as a valuable career experience.

ECTS, what's that?

The European credit transfer system is an accreditation system for periods of university study completed in another European country. Launched within the framework of Erasmus (the higher education part of the Socrates programme), ECTS guarantees the reciprocal recognition of qualifications awarded by its signatory institutions. It has been adopted by more than 1 200 establishment in 30 countries. One ECTS credit corresponds to a unit of value assigned to a course on the basis of the work involved. Accumulating 60 ECTS credits is equivalent to one year's academic study.

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Europass training

Since 1 January 2000 the Europass training document has been issued to individuals who complete a European work-linked training scheme ('pathway') in both their home country and abroad. This Community document provides a record of training periods completed in another Member State. It contains basic information on the holder, his or her current vocational training and training periods spent abroad.

The 'toolbox': the mobility action plan

By way of an operational back-up to the recommendation on mobility, the Member States have called for the implementation of an ambitious 'mobility action plan'.

At the Nice European Council in December 2000, EU leaders confirmed that developing mobility for all learners and instructors in Europe constitutes a major policy objective. Welcoming the action plan, they emphasised the following measures:

- improving language skills;
- setting up an Internet portal providing access to the various European sources of information on mobility;
- the recognition of periods spent learning abroad in diploma courses;
- training the teaching and administrative staff involved to deal professionally with mobility, guidance, counselling and drawing up mobility projects;
- drawing up and adopting a quality charter for the reception of foreign students and trainees;
- establishing an inventory of mobility schemes and examples of good practice for exchanges of students, trainees and instructors;
- setting out the various forms of financial support available for mobility from the EU institutions, national governments, local authorities, other public sector sources and the private sector.

'Spontaneous' mobility

Whether they have participated in the Socrates, Youth or Leonardo da Vinci programmes or have been totally unaware of the available EU opportunities, every year sees thousands of people who would like to study, teach, undertake training or work in another European country. Tobias Flessenkemper of the Youth Forum believes that this 'spontaneous' mobility should also be supported. 'Many Europeans already live in cities like London, Paris or Munich. They are either unaware of the relevant Community programmes or fail to satisfy the eligibility criteria. On the other hand, these young people want to be informed of their rights and know the cost of such services as dental treatment. This means that they, too, have a definite need for information.'

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The 42 measures mentioned in the action plan have three main objectives:

- to define and broaden opportunities for mobility in Europe;
- to promote adequate forms of financial backing;
- to increase mobility and improve the conditions for it.

The proposed measures are not mandatory. Under any circumstances, it would be difficult to agree on a set of relevant proposals for the entire European Union. The situation, and consequently appropriate responses, vary from one country to another. The plan should rather be regarded as a toolbox offering a wide range of opportunities.

The great variation in university and educational timetables sometimes gets in the way of synchronising mobility periods. The development of a European academic timetable would be a valuable means of identifying periods of convergence in both academic and vocational training modules.

The absence of harmonised regulations is one of the greatest obstacles to mobility. The introduction of a 'European youth mobility ticket' would allow young people to gain valuable experience anywhere in Europe whilst retaining the advantages provided by their country of origin.

Teachers would also be able to undertake all, or part, of their training in another Member State. In addition, the Member States are called upon to create associate European teacher posts or posts with a European orientation.

A working group of Member State representatives, chaired by the European Commission, will supervise the implementation of these various measures and draw up a progress report every two years.

Equality for all!

According to Manja Klemencic of the European Students Association, 'One of the main concerns expressed by students is that, regardless of participation in EU programmes, young people living in another Member State should enjoy the same access to health care, culture, transport services and the like as young nationals.'

Virtual mobility – a complement to physical mobility

'Current means of communication, such as the Internet, allow contact with people who live in other countries, speak foreign languages and are the product of different cultures' says Piet Henderikx, Director of the International Relations Office in the Catholic University of Louvain. 'If skilfully used, these resources provide excellent learning tools. Adults undergoing training should be offered the opportunity of shorter visits abroad as well as being allowed to work from home or from easily accessible resource centres.'

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Information on the Internet

Dialogue with citizens

This site provides a variety of information for workers or students wishing to visit another Member State.

http://citizens.eu.int
http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/citizens/en/inter.htm

Education and Culture DG

The site of the Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture contains information on the Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth programmes as well as on the recognition of academic and professional qualifications.

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/index_en.htm

Eurodesk

This offers information on education, training, youth policy and the participation of young people in European-wide activities.

http://www.eurodesk.org

EURES

The EURES (European employment services) network provides considerable information on finding work abroad, living and working conditions in 17 European Economic Area countries, and situations vacant.

More than 500 'Eurocounsellors', representing public employment agencies, trade unions and employers' organisations provide information, advice and guidance for those seeking work or staff in other parts of Europe. These Eurocounsellors also attempt to identify and eliminate obstacles to mobility.

This network is coordinated by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment and Social Affairs.

http://europa.eu.int/jobs/eures

Euroguidance and Estia

Euroguidance and Estia provide information designed to promote trainee mobility; this covers such aspects as training schemes, legal formalities, living conditions, and the recognition of qualifications.

www.euroguidance.org.uk
www.estia.educ.goteborg.se

Europe Direct

This service is designed to help answer questions on the European Union. It is possible to consult the 'customised' website for practical information on such matters as travel, employment and study opportunities. A free-call number is also available. In addition, Europe Direct legal experts can advise individuals facing problems with regard to the exercise of their rights.

http://www.europa.eu.int/europedirect/

Moving in Europe

This site was set up on behalf of young volunteers from all the EU Member States and the countries of central and eastern Europe. It provides information on legal and administrative aspects of mobility, with particular reference to the right of residence, taxation and social security systems.

http://www.sosforevs.org

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European Commission

Passport to mobility
Learning differently
Learning abroad

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The mobility of young people, students, teachers, trainers and research workers is an EU priority. Individual mobility is becoming increasingly important in the era of the Internet and economic globalisation. At present, only about a hundred thousand young people a year participate in European educational, training and language-learning exchanges. The continuing existence of socioeconomic, linguistic and practical obstacles prevents many proposed academic and professional visits. This brochure provides a general survey of the situation and describes the approaches currently being explored by the European Union and the Member States with a view to maximising opportunities for mobility.

Other information on the European Union

Information in all the official languages of the European Union is available on the Internet. It can be accessed through the Europa server (**http://europa.eu.int**).

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